

disruptions. I would urge my colleagues to support it.

**H.R. 4680—MEDICARE COVERAGE
AND PRESCRIPTION DRUGS**

SPEECH OF

HON. TOM UDALL

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 28, 2000

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I speak today about the Democratic alternative for providing prescription coverage to all Americans on Medicare. Before I discuss the proposal I would like to tell you that we have seen great success with the Administration's long-term strategy of fiscal discipline. It is working well. Our economy is strong and we should use this moment of prosperity to lengthen the life and modernize Medicare with a prescription drug benefit plan.

Lack of prescription drug coverage among senior citizens and people with disabilities today is similar to the lack of hospital coverage among senior citizens when Medicare was created. Three out of five lack dependable coverage. Only half of beneficiaries have year-round coverage, and one third have no drug coverage at all.

It's projected that this year more than half of Medicare beneficiaries will use prescription drugs costing \$500 or more, and 38 percent will spend more than \$1000. Each year, about 85 percent of Medicare beneficiaries fill at least one prescription. Yet one third of beneficiaries have no coverage for drugs at all. And in 1996, more than half did not have drug coverage for the entire year. In the district that I represent, there are 64,822 seniors aged 65 or older who face the challenge of paying exorbitant prices for prescription drugs.

For the 10 million Medicare beneficiaries living in rural areas, nearly half have no drug coverage. They have less access to employer based retiree health insurance because of the job structure in rural areas.

There is no reason that we in Congress cannot take the necessary steps to ensure that every older American has access to the lifesaving, life enhancing prescription drugs they need.

My Democratic colleagues and I are united in a single strategy to provide these prescription drugs. I don't know how we can deny the fact that with the funds we have, with the obligations we have, with the fact that anybody who lives to be 65 in America today has a life expectancy of 82 or 83 years that their need for life enhancing and life preserving prescription drugs will only increase. Now is the best time to address this issue. We must do it now. The timing is right.

The Republican leaders put forth a plan with a stated goal of providing affordable prescription drugs for seniors, but the policy falls far short of the promise. Their plan fails to guarantee that all seniors who want it will have access to meaningful, affordable, and reliable prescription drug coverage. Their plan also suggests a private insurance benefit that insurers, themselves, say they will not offer and no one will buy if they did offer it because it would be too expensive. Limiting direct financial assistance for prescription drugs to seniors below the \$12,500 income will leave out over half the seniors.

In contrast to the Republican proposal, we as Democrats have a sound plan for all of America's seniors. It ensures that all seniors get voluntary, affordable and reliable prescription coverage through Medicare.

Specifically under our plan, Medicare would cover half of a beneficiary's drug costs up to \$2,000 a year, beginning in 2002. That would increase to half of \$5,000 by 2009. Over that time, monthly premiums would rise from an estimated \$24 to about \$50. There would be no deductible, and no senior would pay out-of-pocket expenses of more than \$4,000 a year.

The issue of providing affordable prescription drugs for every older American is essential. Adding prescription drug coverage to Medicare is not only the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do. It's about giving people a chance to fight for a happy and productive long life.

**HONORING THE LATE PAUL
KEAHEY, JR.**

HON. RALPH M. HALL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 29, 2000

Mr. HALL of Texas. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor for me today to pay tribute to the late Paul Keahey, Jr., a native of Bonham, TX, and a long-time resident of Marshall, TX. Paul passed away in April of this year, having lived his life in dedication to his family, his career and to his community.

I feel a kinship to Paul—and all in the Keahey family. I was born in a home built by a Keahey, and I have served as a State Senator and as a U.S. Congressman and have been privileged to get to work with Paul's mom, Florence Keahey, longtime resident of Fannin County. Paul has been an advisor and supporter—and close friend during my years of public service. I will miss him greatly.

Paul was a self-employed geologist who spent 30 years working in the oil and gas fields of East Texas. He was a member of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, a former chairman of the Business and Economics Department at Jarvis Christian College, a member of the Marshall Historical Society, and a member of the Lighthouse United Pentecostal Church in Marshall. He was a veteran of the United States Army and a lifetime member of the National Rifle Association.

He was born April 8, 1937, in Bonham, TX, the son of Paul R. Keahey, Sr., and Florence Fogle Keahey. He is survived by his wife, Tanya of Marshall; son, Paul "Pauray" Keahey III, of Marshall; sister, Dottie Davis of Garland; uncle, Tim Bruce of Bonham; his mother; and a number of nieces and nephews.

Mr. Speaker, let us take a moment to remember and celebrate the life of Paul Keahey, a good man and good citizen who devoted his life to the area where he was born and raised and chose to live. His memory will live on in the hearts of his family and friends in East Texas.

**CALLING FOR THE RELEASE OF
AMERICAN CITIZEN EDMOND
POPE OF GRANTS PASS**

HON. GREG WALDEN

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 29, 2000

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call attention to a shameful violation of international government of Russia. For three months, an American citizen named Edmond Pope of Grants Pass, Oregon, has been unjustly incarcerated in Russia for the crime of espionage. He has been denied communication with his wife of 30 years and with his parents, who are in ill health. He has been denied legal representation, access to sufficient food and medical treatment and virtually every other right we commonly associate with the justice systems of civilized nations. Indeed, Ed's imprisonment is reminiscent of what used to pass for justice under Soviet communism, when men and women were dragged from their beds in the dark of night, never to be seen again.

Mr. Speaker, Ed Pope is no spy, and he should be returned to his family immediately. We must send a strong message to the government of Russia that now is not the time to return to a system of justice in which human rights are disregarded so indiscriminately.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join our colleague JOHN PETERSON and me in urging the Russian government to send Mr. Pope home.

MEDICARE RX 2000 ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. BILL LUTHER

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 28, 2000

Mr. LUTHER. Mr. Speaker, the time is long overdue to develop a truly meaningful voluntary prescription drug benefit for our nation's seniors. But as we ensure affordable prescription drug coverage that is accessible to each and every senior in America, let us also use this opportunity to remedy the serious disparities in the current Medicare+Choice program.

Just this week, one of the remaining HMOs offering a Medicare+Choice plan in my district announced that it would no longer offer its plan. The reason it gave for its withdrawal: Minnesota's appallingly low payment rates to Medicare HMOs. Citizens in Minnesota as well as other parts of the country are today subsidizing a system that unfairly penalizes them for living in areas of the country that have historically provided low-cost and efficient healthcare services.

Many counties in our country receive such low Medicare HMO payments that seniors either have no HMO option, or receive an unacceptably inadequate benefits package. Even the seniors who have the option to enroll in a Medicare+Choice plan pay high premiums for a relatively meager benefit. At the same time seniors in other parts of the country are receiving generous benefits including prescription drugs without having to pay an extra penny towards a premium.

This issue is about fairness and the efficient delivery of health care as care costs consume